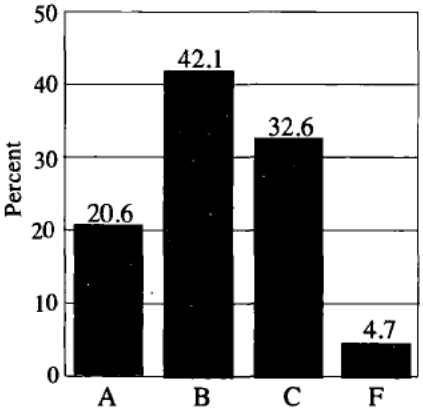
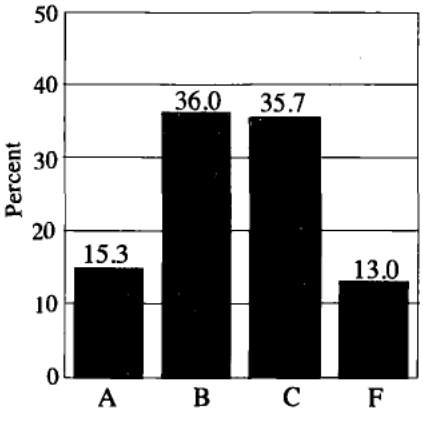
Social Studies 30

Diploma Examination Results
Examiners' Report for January 1997

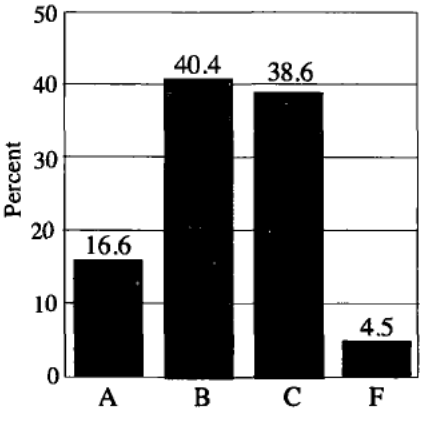
School-Awarded Mark



Diploma Examination Mark



Final Course Mark



The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public with an overview of results from the January 1997 administration of the Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been provided to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined January, April, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a multiple-choice section worth 70% and a written-response section worth 30% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 7 801 students who wrote the January 1997 examination.

- 95.5% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 16.6% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Overall, student achievement in Social Studies 30 was satisfactory. Students demonstrated a good understanding of Social Studies knowledge. In composing their essays, many students showed a clear understanding of the issue under discussion, as well as competent skill in developing and organizing an argumentative paper. The addition of a discretionary half-hour of writing time allows students to focus more on planning, editing, and proofreading their written work.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 68.4%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 65.0%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 67.1%.

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Part A: Multiple Choice

Examination Blueprint

Part A: Multiple Choice has a value of 70 marks, one mark for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: by the curricular content area (topic) being tested and by the knowledge and skill objectives required to answer the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in January 1997 according to these classifications.

All questions on the diploma examination require students to demonstrate knowledge of social studies content and to apply social studies skills to that knowledge base. The reporting categories below define the general types of questions that appear on the examination and the categories for which information is reported.

Question Classification by Knowledge and Skill Objectives	Question Classification by Topic		Total Questions
	Topic A: Political and Economic Systems Knowledge and application of facts, concepts, and generalizations related to the world's political and economic systems as outlined in the *Program of Studies*.	**Topic B: Global Interaction in the 20th Century** Knowledge and application of facts, concepts, and generalizations related to the interaction of nations since 1918 as outlined in the *Program of Studies*.	
Comprehension of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of generalizations, key concepts, and facts related to social studies content.	1, 2, 3, 8, 15, 16, 23, 28, 31, 33, 34, 35	46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 55, 58, 59, 62, 63, 66, 67	24
Interpretation and Analysis of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate their knowledge of social studies content by interpreting and analyzing information and ideas.	4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 29	38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 52, 53, 57, 60, 61, 64, 70	24
Synthesis and Evaluation of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge of social studies content by synthesizing information and ideas, and evaluating their accuracy and worth.	10, 13, 17, 18, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 32	36, 37, 39, 42, 44, 51, 54, 56, 65, 68, 69	22
Total Questions	**35**	**35**	**70**

*Subtest Results**

Results are reported in average raw scores.

Total Part A: 47.0 out of 70

by Topic

- Political and Economic Systems: 23.9 out of 35
- Global Interaction in the 20th Century: 23.1 out of 35

by Knowledge and Skill Objectives

- Comprehension of Information and Ideas: 15.2 out of 24
- Interpretation and Analysis of Information and Ideas: 16.4 out or 24
- Synthesis and Evaluation of Information and Ideas: 15.4 out of 22

*Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school results.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	C	82.5
2	B	73.6
3	A	61.2
4	B	71.6
5	D	49.4
6	B	67.5
7	C	67.5
8	B	58.6
9	C	63.5
10	D	86.0
11	A	66.1
12	A	59.6
13	B	58.5
14	C	61.9
15	C	59.5
16	B	68.4
17	C	83.6
18	D	76.3
19	D	85.7
20	A	80.9
21	B	81.7
22	C	81.6
23	B	63.4
24	C	72.0
25	A	76.7
26	B	63.0
27	D	71.7
28	B	60.7
29	C	49.6
30	A	68.5
31	B	61.0
32	D	38.1
33	A	71.0
34	C	69.4
35	B	78.1
36	C	84.6
37	B	86.6
38	D	82.2
39	C	63.4
40	A	65.9
41	B	63.6
42	A	79.3
43	D	74.7
44	B	64.9
45	C	66.7
46	D	38.3
47	C	37.9
48	A	51.1
49	C	67.7
50	D	62.9
51	D	78.9
52	B	48.9
53	C	68.2
54	C	44.1
55	B	56.7
56	C	57.8
57	D	69.5
58	A	54.9
59	D	69.5
60	A	80.1
61	D	68.5
62	A	74.8
63	B	65.6
64	D	64.9
65	A	69.1
66	D	74.5
67	D	63.2
68	A	62.5
69	B	70.8
70	C	79.5

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results with the provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examiners' Comments

The multiple-choice section of the examination requires students to go beyond simply recalling information by applying their knowledge and thinking skills. Students must demonstrate that they understand social studies concepts; that they comprehend historical, political, and economic relationships; and that they can interpret and evaluate social studies information and ideas.

During the marking session, markers were asked whether the standards embedded in the multiple-choice questions were appropriate and fair. These teachers generally concurred that this section of the examination set an appropriately demanding standard of achievement for graduating Social Studies 30 students. They found the data sources relevant and engaging and the questions challenging but fair.

The following table gives results for five questions selected from the examination. The table shows the percentage of students, in three groups, that answered each question correctly. The comments on pages 4 and 5 address some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

	Question Number				
Student Group	**14**	**32**	**44**	**56**	**57**
All students	61.9	38.1	64.9	57.8	69.5
Students achieving the *standard of excellence* (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	85.2	69.8	90.1	81.5	97.7
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received marks between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	52.0	26.3	54.7	49.5	56.3

Use the following information to answer question 14.

Election Results in a Federal Constituency

Votes received			
Candidate I	1 154	Candidate IV	2 837
Candidate II	3 216	Candidate V	771
Candidate III	363	Candidate VI	2 948
		Total	11 289*

**41% of eligible voters*

14. In Canada, these election results would be

- **A.** valid, and Candidates II, IV, and VI would become members of parliament
- **B.** invalid because no candidate received a clear majority of voter support
- ***C.** valid, and Candidate II would become a member of parliament
- **D.** invalid because the voter turnout was too low

Question 14 was based on a hypothetical set of election results for a federal constituency in Canada. Students were required to determine whether or not the results were valid and which candidate, if any, would have been elected. This question is classified as an Interpretation/Analysis question on Topic A, Political and Economic Systems.

To answer correctly, students had to know that the Canadian electoral system is a system based on a simple plurality and then apply this knowledge to the statistics indicated. The question was not overly difficult: 61.9% of all students (85.2% of those students achieving the standard of excellence) answered correctly. The fact that 25.4% of students who achieved between 50% and 64% concluded that three candidates from this constituency would become members of parliament (A) suggests some serious and alarming gaps in their understanding of Canada's democratic processes.

32. Choose the economic philosophy that is **correctly** matched with a resulting policy.

	Philosophy	Policy
A.	Keynesianism	Nationalization of the means of production
B.	Economic nationalism	Globalization of trade
C.	Socialism	Privatization of key industries
***D.**	Economic conservativism	Deregulation of the marketplace

Question 32 required students to associate a specific economic policy with an appropriate philosophy by demonstrating their knowledge and comprehension of a number of key economic terms. This question is classified as a Synthesis/Evaluation question on Topic A. Students found this question difficult, with only 38.1% of all students answering correctly. However, 69.8% of those students achieving the standard of excellence chose the correct response. That 27.6% of students who achieved between 50% and 64% concluded that the privatization of key industries is integral to socialist thought (C) suggests some serious conceptual confusion.

Use the following map to answer question 44.

—from *The Modern World, 1914–1980*

Question 44 was based on a map of Europe and required students to choose a title for the map by chronologically referencing the information indicated according to the territorial changes shown. The question is classified as a Synthesis/Evaluation question on Topic B.

To answer correctly, students had to recognize the territorial changes as those that occurred in Europe at the end of the Second World War. The loss of territory by Germany, the division of Germany, and the prevalence of Soviet territorial gains provided key details in selecting the correct response. The question was not overly difficult: 64.9% of all students (90.1% of those achieving the standard of excellence) answered correctly.

44. What is the **best** title for this map?

- **A.** Territorial Changes Made During the First World War
- ***B.** Territorial Changes Resulting From the Second World War
- **C.** Territorial Changes Immediately After the Nazi–Soviet Pact
- **D.** Territorial Changes Resulting From the Munich Agreements

Use the following headlines to answer question 56.

56. Which two newspapers display headlines that indicate a direct cause-and-effect relationship?

A. The Leader and The Herald
B. The Times and The Leader
***C.** The Herald and The Daily
D. The Daily and The Times

Question 56 was based on a series of newspaper headlines and tested students' ability to recognize a cause-and-effect relationship between two of the historical events indicated. Students had to move beyond simply recalling isolated bits of information to knowing how they are connected within a political and historical context. This question is classified as a Synthesis/Evaluation question on Topic B.

Students found this question somewhat difficult, with 57.8% of all students answering correctly. However, 81.5% of those achieving the standard of excellence chose the correct response.

Use the following quotation to answer question 57.

> Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that [the United States] shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.
>
> —John F. Kennedy

57. In this quotation, President Kennedy is expressing American willingness to enforce a foreign policy of

A. détente with friendly nations
B. isolation from belligerent nations
C. appeasement of aggressive nations
***D.** containment of expansionist nations

Question 57 was based on a famous quotation from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address. Students were required to determine the larger meaning of Kennedy's pronouncement by carefully reading his comments, interpreting them in the context of the times, and then recognizing their relevance to an important concept regarding the direction of American foreign policy. This question is classified in the blueprint as an Interpretation/Analysis question on Topic B.

Students did not find this question overly difficult: 69.5% of all students (97.7% of those achieving the standard of excellence) answered correctly. The achievement results from this question (and similar ones throughout the examination) are a credit to the critical thinking skills and grasp of knowledge demonstrated by many Grade 12 Alberta social studies students.

Part B: Written Response

The results for the written-response section of the Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination are tabulated according to the percentage of students achieving at each level (1 to 5) in each of the scoring categories. Each scoring category assesses somewhat different skills; consequently, individual students' scores are likely to vary from one category to another. Those students who achieve at or above the standard of excellence (80%) on the written-response section tend to have scores of **(4) Proficient** or**(5) Excellent** for all scoring categories. Students meeting the acceptable standard (50%) on the written-response section tend to have scores of **(3) Satisfactory** or greater for most scoring categories but may produce **(2) Limited** work or less for one or two categories.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignment and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing these results is at the **(3) Satisfactory** level. The scoring guides that describe proficiency levels are in the 1996–97 *Social Studies 30 Information Bulletin.*

The written-response section contributes 30% of the total examination mark. Students are required to write one complete and unified essay in which they discuss the importance and complexity of an issue and rationally defend their position by using supportive, relevant evidence. The organization of arguments should show evidence of logical thought that should persuade the reader. Students are expected to make use of their critical and creative thinking skills to demonstrate complex and independent thought.

Part B: Written Response has a total value of 30 marks: 10 marks each for *Defence of Position* and *Quality of Examples,* and five marks each for *Exploration of the Issue* and *Quality of Language and Expression.* The average raw score mean for Part B was 18.0 out of 30. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to the provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

It should be noted that beginning in January 1995, a two-marker system was adopted for marking Part B; this means that it is now possible for students to be awarded marks that are midway between scoring criteria. (See the following table.)

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark (%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
		Excellent (5)	(4.5)	Proficient (4)	(3.5)	Satisfactory (3)	(2.5)	Limited (2)	(1.5)	Poor (1)	Ins*
Exploration of the Issue	5	2.6	4.2	11.1	13.8	26.2	20.4	16.0	4.1	1.5	0.2
Defence of Position	10	2.8	4.1	11.5	14.9	27.4	20.9	13.8	3.3	1.2	0.2
Quality of Examples	10	2.4	3.5	9.2	12.5	24.1	20.6	18.3	6.0	3.2	0.2
Quality of Language and Expression	5	3.5	5.1	14.5	18.2	38.0	13.6	5.7	1.1	0.2	0.2

* **Ins** (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded a **Satisfactory** standard of performance.

Topic A

Some people believe that central planning as an economic system is no longer workable or desirable. Others believe that central planning is a desirable model. Still others believe that some principles of central planning are worthwhile in certain circumstances.

Is economic central planning obsolete?

In your essay, take and defend a position on this issue.

Topic B

Some people believe that threats of aggression and war will always exist and, therefore, it is necessary for nations to maintain military forces. Others believe that changing global conditions have eliminated the need for military forces.

Is it still necessary for nations to maintain military forces?

In your essay, take and defend a position on this issue.

Examiners' Comments

The average score achieved by students writing the Diploma Examination essay reached an all-time high of 18.0/30 (a .5 mark increase over the results of January 1996). This result reflects continuing improvement in students' performance and, possibly, a change in the population choosing to write the Social Studies 30 Diploma examination, rather than any change in the applied standard.

The assigned questions were generally regarded by teacher-markers as being curricularly valid and as providing an appropriate challenge for students completing the Social Studies 30 course: as one marker observed, "These questions definitely allow students to demonstrate what they know." The relative infrequency of essays reflecting the "insufficient," "poor," and "limited" standards suggests that most students were able to engage the assigned issues confidently and competently.

Despite observing a general improvement in the quality of student compositions, teacher-markers noted several areas of concern that might profitably be addressed by classroom teachers. The first of these involved the failure of many students to explicitly link argument and evidence. Many students writing at the "satisfactory" standard cited examples and case studies that were accurate and applicable, but then failed to explain their relevance to the position being adopted on the assigned issue. Others provided valid arguments and reasons for adopting a particular position but failed to provide supporting evidence. The ability to link position, argumentation, and evidence lies at the intellectual and methodological heart of the diploma examination essay and is a skill that has application well beyond the confines of the Social Studies classroom. Teachers are well advised to cultivate this skill not only through classroom-based writing assignments but also in class discussion and debate.

A second related concern commonly raised by markers regards the failure of many students to address the specific question being asked. These students seem to have adopted the practice of writing a "generic" essay that addresses the essay topic in a fairly general fashion while not specifically answering the actual assigned essay question. The resulting essays tend to be over-generalized and unfocused, failing to achieve the potential suggested by their factual content. This observation suggests that students wishing to move beyond the level of satisfactory writing should be dissuaded from adopting test-taking strategies that rely upon the simple memorization of model essays and should be encouraged instead to concentrate upon applying course content to the actual assignment.

Topic A

A large proportion of students writing the topic A essay question "Is economic central planning obsolete?" chose instead to write on the topic "Which economic system is best?" The resulting "comparative advantages" papers took the word "obsolete" to mean "bad" or "undesirable" and, while not entirely off topic, ignored important connotations of the word "obsolete" as well as the focus of the assignment on the past and future of centrally planned economies. Papers of this sort tended to be graded at or below the "satisfactory" standard in the three content-oriented grading criteria.

The majority of students who focused on the assigned topic typically argued that central planning was obsolete. This position was supported by valid and relevant examples focusing on the ongoing economic problems faced by centrally planned states that resulted in the economic collapse of a majority of those states in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Those students who defended central planning as a viable approach to economic management acknowledged these recent failures but argued that central planning could still be used to encourage rapid industrial growth and to promote a measure of equality, security, and stability. Students adopting this approach tended to argue that the costs associated with central planning were justified by its outcomes, citing examples such as the rapid economic development of the Soviet Union under Stalin's Five Year Plans.

A minority of students took an intermediate position on the issue, asserting that, while attempts to completely control all aspects of economic activity had failed, the basic ideals and goals of central planning remained valid, alive, and attainable by means of government intervention in mixed economies. The "echos" of central planning evident in modern mixed economies include the creation of the "Welfare State" and social safety net, government regulation in defense of the public interest, management of the economy through fiscal and monetary policy, direct intervention in times of crisis, and indicative planning. Students adopting this position tended to regard the evolution of the mixed economy as an attempt to synthesize the free market and centrally planned economic systems.

Students writing on the Topic A assignment generally demonstrated an impressive understanding of the competing economic systems and a commendable grasp of the evolving nature of economic systems since the momentous events of 1989. Clearly, most students writing on this topic were well prepared, and many wrote with a fluency and force that reflects a mature and internalized understanding of the topic.

Topic B

The Topic B question "Is it still necessary for nations to maintain military forces?" attracted significantly more students than did the Topic A question. Students writing on this topic presented a wide range of arguments and examples touching on all aspects and content areas of the Topic B curriculum. Typical arguments supporting the retention of military force included the following.

- Even though the Soviet Union no longer poses a threat to the Western Democracies, the emergence of new regional threats suggests a continuing need for deterrence and the capability to respond to aggression with force. Ultimately, armed forces are an insurance policy against unanticipated threats. This argument was frequently supported by references to the Second Gulf War 1990–91.

- The presence of military forces does not necessarily mean that war will occur. Having a strong deterrent can protect the peace, but conversely, lack of military capability may force nations to adopt a posture of appeasement. Arguments of this sort were commonly supported by references to the success of nuclear deterrence in preventing direct superpower conflict throughout the Cold War despite numerous provocations.

- Students opposing the retention of military forces by national governments typically defended their position by arguing that the cost of war in the nuclear age is simply too high. Nuclear weapons have made war itself obsolete and, so too, conventional armies. Students pursuing this train of thought frequently described the consequences of the atomic bombing of Japan and the near catastrophes of the Cold War.

Students taking qualified positions on the issue tended to present variations on one or more of the following arguments:

- Although states will want to maintain their own armed forces, the use of military force is necessary to support collective security and nations should place their forces at the United Nation's disposal. In the past, the United Nations has been successful because it was able to resort to military intervention using the resources provided by member states. Examples commonly cited in the exploration of this position included UN involvement in Korea, Somalia, Bosnia, and Central Africa.

- The decision to disarm can only be made on a country-to-country basis depending upon an assessment of each nation's security needs.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

	Part A	Part B
A	23.7%	13.1%
B	33.0%	20.6%
C	30.2%	44.2%
F	13.1%	22.1%

While it is not intended that parts A and B of the examination be considered as separate examinations or that each part necessarily tests the same curricular objectives, it is interesting to see the distribution of student results. In January 1997, considerably more students were awarded scores in the "A" category on Part A of the examination than on Part B, and considerably more students were awarded scores in the "F" category on Part B of the examination than on Part A. These scores do not signal a new phenomenon, but are consistent with results of recent administrations.

Readers are reminded that a new *Samples of Student Writing* document, based on essays written from the January 1995 administration, is available from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre, 12360 - 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5L 4X9, 403-427-5775 (Fax 422-9750). The order number is 308660-01 @ $4.40 per booklet.

For further information, contact Barry Jonas (bjonas@edc.gov.ab.ca) or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch at 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

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